

Pesticide Storage Concerns

Safe pesticide storage is of critical importance in both everyday and disaster situations. Not only can improperly stored pesticides pose significant hazards to humans, but they can do great harm to the environment, including surface water and groundwater contamination. Accordingly, take appropriate measures to minimize storage quantities and potential exposure to floodwaters, and if flooding of pesticides occurs, be sure to follow safe, legal methods for emergency response, containment, and cleanup.

Prevention

- *Choose a safe location.* If at all possible, locate pesticides in an area where flooding is not likely. A good location will be downwind and downhill from sensitive areas, such as homes, play areas, ponds, and streams.
- *Develop a safe pesticide storage area.* Features may include a mixing and loading pad, a drainage system to collect contaminated runoff, a worker safety area, and a separate area for your personal protective clothing and equipment.
- *Keep pesticide storage to a minimum.* The fewer pesticides on site, the less you have to worry about. Consider the following:
 - Contract to have pesticides applied. This eliminates storage and most liability concerns.
 - Clean out existing inventories. If a pesticide is still registered for use, give it to a producer who can legally use it. If it is no longer registered, dispose of it properly.
 - Purchase only enough pesticide for a single season.
 - Take extra care with water-permeable containers. Dry formulations packed in paper bags, cardboard boxes, or similar containers should be stored on metal shelves. Do not store liquid pesticides on shelves above dry formulations.
- *If flooding is imminent, move pesticides to a higher storage location.*
- *Develop an emergency response plan in case of a leak, spill, or fire.*

If Flooding Has Occurred

- If you suspect flooding of pesticide storage areas, use great caution in investigating the immediate area. Wear appropriate protective clothing, particularly safety boots, to avoid exposure.
- If a release of pesticides has occurred, you should notify your Local Emergency Planning Committee.
- Take appropriate steps to prevent further release of the pesticides. Put smaller containers that are leaking into larger containers and contain the spill material to the fullest extent possible by constructing a dam to prevent the chemical from spreading.

Adapted from resource material developed by the University of Wisconsin Extension Service entitled "The Disaster Handbook for Extension Agents"